

Double Trouble State Park
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail
County Road 618, 1 mile West of
Garden State Parkway
Double Trouble
Ocean County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1021

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

DOUBLE TROUBLE STATE PARK

HABS No. NJ-1021

Location: New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail, County Road 618, 1 mile West of Garden State Parkway, Double Trouble, Ocean County, New Jersey.

Significance: Double Trouble developed in the early nineteenth-century supporting lumber and cranberry industries. Purchased by the state in the 1960s and converted into a state park, today the village exists as a well-preserved "historic village" providing "a window into pinelands industries."¹

History: Development of the Double Trouble area began around 1765, when a sawmill was built on a branch of Cedar Creek. While some sources attribute the early building to Anthony Sharp, others claim that Thomas Potter, founder of the first Universalist Church, was responsible for the mill. The origin of the town name is also debatable. According to one story, the mill dam was washed out by storms twice in two days, causing Potter to exclaim "now we have double trouble."² More colorful accounts of the story credit "two mischievous muskrats" for the name. After the muskrats ate through the dam for the second time, a preacher named Tilton observed "here's double trouble!"³

The village of Double Trouble began to develop in the 1830s after the land was purchased by William Gilberson. From 1850 until his death, Gilberson's lumber business thrived. Valuable white cedar, an excellent wood for boats and homes, was cut and transported to shore communities, such as Long Branch. By 1904, when Edward Crabbe purchased the property, two cranberry bogs, another sawmill and workers' homes had been added. Though the original sawmill no longer exists, an early twentieth century steam-powered example remains on the property. The factory was modernized in the 1920s and equipped with a kerosene engine. While maintaining the lumber activities, Crabbe concentrated on expanding cranberry cultivation. In the early 1900s, prosperous Double Trouble Cranberry Company harvests yielded up to 225 acres of berries.⁴

Though the property was purchased by the state in 1964, the park has not been overly developed. The unguided visitor pulling in off Pinewald Keswick Road, confronts a scattered grouping of clapboard houses, stores and sheds. Old rusted pieces of machinery and rotting fenceposts remain undisturbed. Without guiding signs and preventative barriers, the park promotes thoughtful exploration. The earliest remaining structure, a schoolhouse built in 1890, stands near the entrance gate.

¹ "Double Trouble State Park," brochure (N.J. Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry), 1.

² Larry Waddell, "State Park Development Slow at Double Trouble," *Ashbury Park Press* (Sept. 6, 1983), B2.

³ "Double Trouble," brochure (Toms River: Berkeley Township Historical Society, n.d.)

⁴ Waddell, 2[B].

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Several other buildings, including a two-story residence and a general store, were constructed at the turn of the century. A complex of smaller cottages, a bunk house and a cook house accommodated the cranberry workers who lived here in the early 1920s.⁵ Dirt paths wander among the buildings, and parallel the cranberry bogs located to the east and west. A nature trail describing local flora and fauna begins near the Gowdy bog, one of several bogs currently cultivated. The one and one-half mile trail loops through a pine and oak forest, crossing Cedar Creek at the half way point. The strangely silent, tea-colored stream is sheltered by tall cedar stands. In the summer, blueberry bushes following the trail compensate for the dry and barren cranberry bogs.

Despite the proximity of the Garden State Parkway, and considering its status as a state park, Double Trouble remains relatively untouched. A rare example of once plentiful natural resources, the park also preserves vernacular farm buildings characteristic of early twentieth century industries.

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Sources: "Double Trouble." (brochure) Toms River: Berkeley Township Historical Society, n.d.

"Double Trouble State Park." (brochure) N.J. Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry, [n.d.].

Waddell, Larry. "State park development slow at Double Trouble." Asbury Park Press, 6 September 1983, B2.

Project Information: This project was sponsored by the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail (NJCHT) of the National Park Service, Janet Wolf, director. The documentation was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Robert Kapsch, chief, under the direction of HABS historian Sara Amy Leach, project supervisor. Three historians completed the research during summer 1991: Field supervisor Sarah Allaback (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Alfred Holden (University of Vermont), and Camille Gatz (North Carolina). David Ames (University of Delaware) made the large-format photographs. Historian, Elizabeth Harris May (George Washington University), edited the HABS reports.

⁵ "Double Trouble State Park" brochure.